

# MESOPOTAMIAN MINUTE

*- Current News on Agriculture & USDA in Iraq -*  
**Office of Agricultural Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Baghdad**

Sunday, September 12, 2010

## **USDA Helps Iraq Tackle Domestic Feeding Program -**

From August 22<sup>nd</sup> to September 5<sup>th</sup> seven high level Iraqi Ministry of Trade officials visited USDA's Food and Nutrition Service and Texas A&M to learn about the administration of the SNAP and other programs as well as electronic benefit payments. The training is part a broader effort to improve the management, enforcement, and targeting of Iraq's troubled Public Distribution Program (PDS) feeding program. A World Food Program representative also participated. The training was organized by USDA's Cochran Fellowship Program.



Food Programs Team welcomed by Fmr. Ambassador Ryan Croker at the George Bush School of Government, Texas A&M

**Dokan Dam** - USDA drew attention to a developing water situation in Northern Iraq last week. The rapid drawdown of a major storage reservoir (Dokan) for hydro-electric power generation is threatening fall and early winter irrigation and livestock water availability along the Tigris corridor. By Embassy Baghdad's signaling the reduced water flow to GoI authorities, action to reduce discharge is expected post-Eid.

**Taji Agricultural Extension** – Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Taji hosted USDA Extension Advisor David Drew for a three-day tour of demonstration farms and Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture Extension and Provincial Agricultural facilities. A major wholesale/retail agricultural supply facility was also evaluated. The purpose of the engagement was to evaluate the current state and effectiveness of extension activities in Iraq at the field level.



**Veterinarian Visit to Rumatha Slaughterhouse** – USDA Animal Health Advisor Dr. Jessica McCoy visited a new slaughter house provided by PRT Maysan. Slaughtered cattle were inspected by an Iraqi veterinarian at the facility and were quartered and loaded on the trucks for market.

**Iraq's 2010/11 Wheat Production** - The final wheat production estimate is still being determined. Iraq's 2010/11 crop exceeded expectations and may be as much as double the drought reduced crops of the previous two years. High level officials in the respective Iraq and Kurdistan Ministries of Agriculture put domestic production at 2.45 MMT, and estimate that another hundred thousand tons of imported wheat was recently delivered to Ministry of Trade silos. In a forthcoming report, USDA/Baghdad is penciling in domestic production at 2.6 MMT.

**Personnel Update**- There are currently 34 USDA personnel in Iraq including those with Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), at Embassy Baghdad or embedded with U.S. military units. After a year, Senior Agricultural Attaché Paul Spencer departs September 13 and has been replaced by Charles Rush. Balad PRT AgAdvisor Franklin Johnson departed after 18 months in Iraq.

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